CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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LETTER DATED 6 JANUARY 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT TRANSMITTING A STATEMENT MADE BY A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION CONCERNING ADAPTATION OF THE TREATY ON CONVENTIONAL ARMED FORCES IN EUROPE

I have the honour to attach a statement made by a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation concerning the adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe.

I would be grateful if this statement could be issued as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament and distributed to the delegations of all member States of the Conference and non-member States participating in the work of the Conference.

(Signed) Vasily S. Sidorov
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
of the Russian Federation
to the Conference on Disarmament

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STATEMENT MADE BY A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION CONCERNING ADAPTATION OF THE TREATY ON CONVENTIONAL ARMED FORCES IN EUROPE

The autumn session of negotiations on the adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) has concluded in Vienna.

On 2 December 1998, at a meeting of OSCE Ministers for Foreign Affairs in Oslo, the participating States agreed to resolve key issues involved in the adaptation during the first months of 1999. Russia considers that decisive progress should be achieved at the talks before the official entry of new members into NATO.

This is so in particular because the expansion of the alliance will create a threat to the current CFE, which was founded on the principle of upholding equality of forces between the two groups of States parties. If the new members of NATO do not declare their membership of the group of countries which signed or acceded to the 1948 Treaty of Brussels or the 1949 Treaty of Washington, and if they are not included in that group's quota for arms and equipment, the entire system of equilibrium underlying the CFE will be destroyed, and its group-based machinery will be undermined. Because of the specific nature of the provisions of the instrument, Russia's right to conduct inspection activity on the territory of the new NATO members on the same scale as on the territory of the other members of the alliance will be infringed. All this will call into question the future existence of the CFE.

An evolution of the situation in that direction would threaten Russia's security interests by undermining the viability of the CFE. In the event that the key issues involved in adaptation of the treaty are not resolved, Russia will be compelled to take appropriate steps to protect its interests, including the convening of an extraordinary conference of the States parties to examine the exceptional circumstances relating to the CFE and their impact on its application.

It should be clear that if one group of countries deliberately violates a treaty, they will not be entitled to count on its scrupulous observance by other parties.

Russia firmly believes that if an overall understanding is reached in good time on the key parameters of the future CFE, this would enable the States parties to comply with the existing treaty in the light of the understanding and not resort to special procedures during the period leading up to the completion of talks on the adaptation and the conclusion of a revised treaty.

Russia reaffirms its readiness to follow this path. The ball is in the NATO countries' court.